Linking Service Learning and The California Standards

Academic Content Standards:
English/Language Arts
Mathematics
History/Social Science
Science
Visual and Performing Arts

Challenge Standards:
Health Education
Physical Education

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Introduction

As we enter a new century facing unparalleled economic, social, and political challenges in a highly technical world, we are driven to explore innovative strategies to strengthen democratic societies. An educated, competent, and responsible citizenry as the cornerstone of a democratic society is fundamental to meeting the ever-changing needs of our ever-changing world. Theodore Roosevelt once remarked, "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." These words ring as true today as they did nearly a hundred years ago.

The service learning movement in education was introduced as a solution toward enhancing the academic achievement of students while developing a strong sense of civic pride and commitment. Designed as a movement to incorporate service in the academic curriculum, service learning has proven to be an effective instructional practice in a variety of K-12 educational settings.

The spirit of volunteerism is a powerful component of any democratic citizenry for people of all ages. It is important to understand, however, that any activity, no matter how altruistic it may be, cannot be justified in an educational setting unless it also meets educational goals adopted by the school district. In that end, service learning must be embraced as an instructional strategy to meet adopted academic content standards.

Why Standards?

The past decade has witnessed a number of educational reform policies adopted in response to the growing discontent of the American public education system as perceived by the general public. Most states have adopted rigorous academic content standards that specifically identify what it is that students, "need to know and be able to do" in a number of academic content areas. These adopted standards are currently driving instructional practices and the selection and use of specific instructional resources. High stakes accountability systems have been put into place in an effort to "raise the bar" for students, teachers, and administrators.

In 1996 the California Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards was charged with the responsibility to develop academically rigorous content and performance standards for all core curriculum areas, to be used in public schools maintaining kindergarten and grades 1 through 12. According to the California Education Code:

> "*Content standards'* means the specific academic knowledge, skills and abilities that public schools in this state are expected to teach and all pupils expected to learn in each of the core curriculum areas, at each grade level tested…" (California Education Code §60603 (d))

> "…*'Performance standards'* are standards that define various levels of competence at each grade level in each of the curriculum areas for which content standards are established. Performance standards gauge the degree to which the student has met the content standards and the degree to which a school or school district has met the content standards." (California Education Code §60603 (h))

> "…The performance standards shall be established against specific grade level benchmarks of academic achievement for each subject area tested and shall be based on the knowledge and skills that pupils will need in order to succeed in the information-based, global economy of the 21st century." (California Education Code §60605 (a))

California Academic Content Standards were developed and adopted by the California State Board of Education as follows:

- English/Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, K-12, adopted December, 1977
- Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools, K-12, adopted December, 1977
- History/Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, K-12, adopted October, 1998
- Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, K-12, adopted October, 1998

Federal legislation, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), mandates the local adoption of standards of academic achievement in at least the areas of reading and mathematics that are "at least as rigorous as" the standards adopted by the State. In addition, California's Coordinated Compliance Review and Consolidated Application process both call for the alignment of local and state standards and the reporting of student achievement in terms of those standards.

Increasing Academic Achievement Through Standards-based Practices

Innovative standards-based practices systems such as the one below developed by the Western Assessment Collaborative at WestEd are being implemented in an effort to increase academic achievement for *all* students, K-12. "Backwards mapping" practices encourage educators to design and utilize data from assessment measures to guide effective instruction for students.

Traditional Practice	Standards-based Practices
Select a topic from the curriculum ⬇	**Select standards from among those students need to know** ⬇
Design instructional activities ⬇	**Design an assessment through which students will have an opportunity to demonstrate those things** ⬇
Design and give an assessment ⬇	**Decide what learning opportunities students will need to learn those things** ⬇
Give grade or feedback ⬇	**Plan instructional opportunities to assure that each student has adequate opportunities to learn** ⬇
Move onto a new topic	**Use data from assessment to give feedback, re-teach or move to next level**

Traditionally, teachers begin the instructional planning process by selecting a topic of study, usually from a curriculum guide or textbook. Instructional activities and strategies are developed or selected to teach the identified topic to students. Teachers design and utilize an assessment tool to measure learning and usually give feedback to students. Often there is little time or few resources to re-teach lessons to students who have not learned the material and teachers move onto the next topic of study.

Through a standards-based practices approach, the entire instructional planning process is designed with the "end in mind," the "end" being the standard(s) which describe what students *need to know* and *be able to do*. Assessment measures are designed before instructional

strategies to help teachers have a clear understanding of not only *what* students will need to know but also *how* they will be expected to demonstrate their learning.

Learning opportunities and instructional strategies are specifically designed to help every student reach the identified standard(s) and be able to demonstrate their learning on an assessment measure. Learning opportunities define what *students* will do (view a video, read a book, conduct an experiment, etc.) to achieve the knowledge and skills identified in the standard(s). The instructional strategies define what *teachers* will do (scaffold key ideas, provide glossary of terms, offer manipulatives and hands-on resources, etc.) to enable the learning to occur. When assessment is conducted, teachers engaged in a standards-based practices approach use the information or data from assessment measures to give feedback to students about their achievement and re-teach concepts as needed to ensure that *every* student reaches the identified standard(s).

The Need for an Actively Engaged Citizenry

Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone* (2000), describes the gradual decline of "social contract" evidenced by an increasing lack of participation among Americans in political campaigns, community action groups, social organizations, civic groups, religious institutions, and social clubs.

Generally speaking, our young people today are better educated and living lives that are easier, healthier, and longer than past generations. But sadly, they are also spending less and less time volunteering in their community, joining civic groups, and visiting their polling booths.

Data regarding the civic participation of Americans as "voters" is equally dismal. According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate (1999), fewer than half of the eligible citizens voted in the 1996 presidential election. The age group with the lowest voter turnout was 18-25. This information prompted the League of Women Voters (1997) to conclude that "the health of our democracy is in jeopardy." Forthcoming data regarding voter turnout in the recent presidential election will be noteworthy considering the competitive nature of the race and a

national campaign to get "every vote out". Initial reports speculate that only 55% of the eligible voters in the 2000 presidential election actually voted.

The recent findings of the *Civics Report Card for the Nation,* conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1999) are also discouraging. The report states that 30-35 percent of students assessed in grades 4, 8, and 12 performed *below* the "Basic level" of even "partial mastery" of the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to understand how a democracy works. Only 9 percent of the eighth grade students assessed could list two ways a democratic society benefits from the active participation of its citizens.

The decline in "social contract" described by Putnam, low voter turnout in recent elections, and discouraging findings from the NAEP report are indicative of an evolving culture that threatens our collective ability to make reasoned and informed choices that serve the common good. The solution lies with all of us but perhaps the social institution best suited to lead the charge is public education.

The Introduction of Service Learning

Although the term, *service learning* was coined in the 1970s, the tenets of curriculum embedded service were promoted much earlier by educational scholars such as John Dewey, Hilda Taba, and Ralph Tyler and later by contemporary scholars, John Goodlad and Ernest Boyer (Wade, 2000).

In the early 1900s, educator Arthur Dunn promoted service in the community as a central feature of the social studies curriculum. Dunn instructed students in his 1904 Indianapolis community civics class to identify specific community problems in the urban setting and develop and apply solutions. As a member of the 1916 Social Studies Committee, Dunn led the work to provide an early description of service learning (Wade, 2000):

> The good citizen can be defined as a person who habitually conducts himself with proper regard for the welfare of the communities of which he is a member, and who is active and intelligent in his cooperation with his fellow members to that end.

Eventually, two textbooks were developed for two courses of study, "Community Civics" and "Problems of Democracy," used until the 1950s. In the 1960s, service learning emerged again in the social studies through several programs, publications and support from the National Council for the Social Studies (Wade, 2000).

The Definition of Service Learning

The breakthrough for service learning at the national level occurred in 1990 when President George Bush signed the National and Community Service Act. Reauthorized in 1993 as the National and Community Service Trust Act, and signed by President Bill Clinton, it defined service learning as a method (California Department of Education, 1999):

> (A) under which students of participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that –
>   (i)   is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
>   (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and
>   (iii) helps foster civic responsibility; and
> (B) that –
>   (i) is integrated into and enhances the [core] academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
>   (ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

The Service Learning Goals of
State Superintendent Delaine Eastin

In California, service learning took on increasing importance through the establishment of goals for implementing service learning by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Delaine Eastin (California Department of Education, 1999):

> • By the year 2000, 25 percent of California's 994 school districts should offer all students at least one community service or service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve) for a minimum of three

opportunities throughout their kindergarten through grade twelve education.

- By the year 2004, 50 percent of California school districts should offer all students at least one service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve).

Also significant in 1996 was the inclusion of service learning as a component of the California Challenge Schools Initiative and the establishment of the California Superintendent's Service Learning Task Force. Federal funding from the Corporation for National Service soon filtered down to state departments of education through Learn and Serve America grants. These monies were earmarked for the development of service learning programs in public schools, K-12 and the development of volunteerism through AmeriCorp and SeniorCorp programs.

Since 1996, hundreds of service learning programs have sprung up in schools across the nation. By the year 2000, California nearly reached its goal of providing students in twenty five percent of the 994 school districts in the state with a minimum of three community service or service learning opportunities through their K-12 education. According to the Family and Community Partnerships Office of the California Department of Education, efforts are continuing toward reaching the goal identified for 2004.

Why *Service Learning?*

The success of service learning in school settings as an instructional strategy for academic achievement rests almost entirely on two fundamental values and ideas: a) What is the *purpose* of education? And, b) How can service learning be used *effectively* to meet academic content standards?
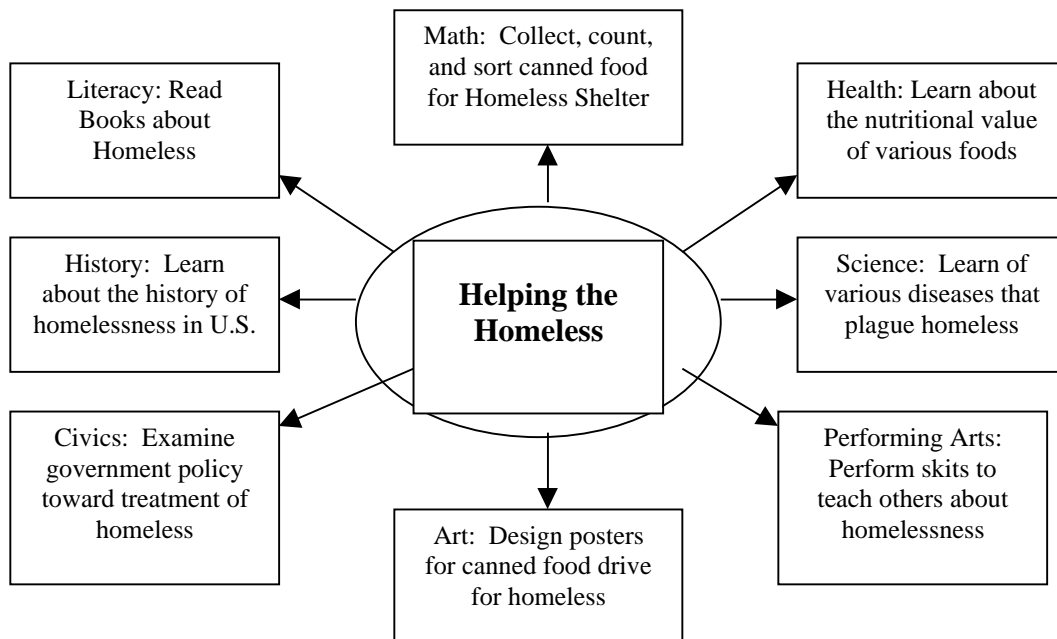
Most educators (and the general public) would agree that the fundamental purpose of education is to promote academic content knowledge and achievement. The California State Board of Education, as stated earlier, has determined what it is students currently "need to know and be able to do". The "how" is still under a great deal of discussion. Some districts are mandating specific programs and strategies but there are hundreds of instructional practices from which to choose from. Why should a teacher or school district adopt service learning among the many

viable, effective programs and strategies available? The answer depends upon the belief system of educators regarding the *purpose* of education.   If educators truly believe that the *purpose* of education is to educate the *whole child* then service learning can be a viable, effective practice that can meet several objectives.

However, if the service learning program is not effective in promoting academic achievement by meeting academic content standards, it cannot be justified as a viable strategy in today's educational arena. If educators are relentless in making the best use of funding, time, and resources for the benefit of students, then service learning needs to be highly effective in meeting academic standards as well as improving students' civic responsibility.

Service Learning as an *Effective* Instructional Strategy to Meet Academic Content Standards

In an attempt to link service learning to academic content standards, most practitioners begin with the service learning project and then search for curriculum standards links that can be aligned to the service activity. A common example is shown below.

Math: Collect, count, and sort canned food for Homeless Shelter

Literacy: Read Books about Homeless

Health: Learn about the nutritional value of various foods

History: Learn about the history of homelessness in U.S.

Helping the Homeless

Science: Learn of various diseases that plague homeless

Civics: Examine government policy toward treatment of homeless

Performing Arts: Perform skits to teach others about homelessness

Art: Design posters for canned food drive for homeless

Though well intentioned, this type of approach is difficult for most educators to adopt because it does not fit the "backwards mapping model" utilized in a standards-based system. Educators dedicated to implementing standards-based practices begin their instructional practice by identifying the specific standard(s) among those students *need to know*. If service learning is the instructional practice of choice, it is used as a strategy to meet the standard. In other words, begin with the standard, not the service activity.

The format of this document is purposely designed to reflect a "backwards mapping model" approach to implementing standards-based practices. Each example begins with a specific academic content or challenge standard in a specific grade level followed by a specific service learning activity designed to meet the identified standard. Many of the service learning activities described can be easily linked to other academic areas and utilized to meet a variety of content or challenge standards.

Classroom teachers who are using state standards to drive their curriculum and instructional practices will find this document easy to use. It contains a number of service learning activities that can be utilized as instructional strategies to meet specific California Academic Content Standards in virtually every grade level in the areas of

- English/Language Arts
- Mathematics
- History/Social Science
- Science

It also contains service learning activities that can be utilized to meet the California Challenge Standards in the areas of:

- Health
- Physical Education
- Visual and Performing Arts

Service Learning as a Performance Assessment Measure

Innovative schools are moving beyond the use of service learning as an instructional strategy. They are using service learning as an authentic alternative assessment designed to measure academic achievement and other important dimensions of learning not often recognized on norm

referenced tests. According to Kathryn Blash Cumbo, Consultant for the Office of Service Learning at the Colorado Department of Education and Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur, Assistant Professor at Montana State University (1999), "Service-learning provides the foundation for the type of education called for by the authentic assessment movement. Service-learning engages students in the application of academic content to real-world tasks that occur in real-life contexts. The topic of "choosing a good task," which contextualizes the benchmarks of the content standards, is a primary component of making connections between these reform movements."

A valuable resource for educators interested in utilizing service learning as a performance assessment measure is the "Service Learning and Assessment Field Guide for Teachers, published by the National Service-Learning and Assessment Study Group (1999). The National Study Group identified specific assessment processes, tools and protocols in place in Maine, California, Vermont, the District of Columbia, and Colorado designed to "help teachers move away from traditional learning and assessment practices toward authentic assessment, standards-based education, development of critical thinking skills and social responsibility." An example from the District of Columbia is described below:

Developing a Service Learning Standards-Driven Assessment Plan

District of Columbia Public Schools Mathematics (Standard) Benchmarks, grade 8:
Algebraic Concepts and Operations, Patterns, Relationships and Functions
Each student uses models, equations, and graphs to solve problems and to describe and analyze relationships among variables.
Each student:
- Describes, represents, and extends number patterns with tables, graphs, and rules
- Analyzes functions to explain how a change in one quantity results in a change in another quantity
- Demonstrates an understanding of the concept of variable as used in expressions and equations
- Develops equations and inequalities to represent problem situations
- Solves linear equations using concrete, informal, and formal methods

Service Learning Activity: The goals of the Alcohol in the Community Project include:
- Understand the effects of alcoholism on the individual and the community;
- Relate math to a community issue; and
- Present and compare statistical information using graphs and ratios.

Assessment Prompt: Calculate how many liquor stores and liquor ads were in your assigned neighborhood and compare that number to the number of community resources you found. Summarize your findings in writing and also by using a bar graph. Your performance will be rated with a scoring guide that details criteria for quality work.

Conclusion

In a March 22, 2000, *Education Week* article, Rosemary C. Salomone (2000), Professor of Law at St. Johns' University School of Law reminded us that the U.S. Supreme Court has "affirmed that preparation for democratic citizenship is the primary end of state-supported education." If the findings of the NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation and the trends indicated by Robert Putnam in his book, *Bowling Alone* are true, then the role of education is unfulfilled and the future of our democratic state is in turmoil.

Recently enacted educational reforms may increase the academic achievement of our young people but neglect to address the other important skills, attitudes, and dispositions needed to sustain and enliven democratic pursuits. *Every Student a Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self* developed by the Education Commission of the States (2000) calls for

> The need for 'nuts and bolts' of citizenship [to] include teaching children how to connect with and mobilize their fellow citizens in organizing and advocating around issues. 'Civic smarts' involve not just knowing what has to be done, but how to get something done. Thus, service learning projects that involve civic issues, in addition to providing experience-based education, are places where the young can cut their political teeth. [It] is a significant pedagogy for helping students develop into good citizens because it provides both a context and a method for practicing the requisite civic skills.

Service Learning has proven to be an innovative and effective strategy for increasing academic achievement in an environment that is meaningful and purposeful to the learner. It provides students with the skills, attitudes, and a commitment to understand and act as vehicles for positive change in a democratic state. Through service learning, young people learn the most valuable lesson of all – that *what* they learn in the classroom is important for effectuating change for the common good in the world around them. But unless service learning is used as a

vehicle for meeting academic standards, it will never become fully institutionalized in our current educational system.

We are witnessing a gradual increase in the number of local and state policies, educational reforms, mandates, supporting frameworks, documents, and funding sources devoted to implementing highly effective service learning programming. Educators and the general public are beginning to see the benefits of using service learning as a valuable instructional strategy for meeting academic content standards and as an authentic performance assessment of rigorous learning both in and outside the classroom. More and more service learning programs are embedded into the regular school day, after-school programs, pre-service teacher education programs, and in partnership with parent and community groups, colleges and universities.

Within the next ten years we will, hopefully, see a rise in the quality and quantity of highly effective service learning programs that will shape new educational reforms and redefine the "purpose" of education to include more than "academic achievement".

As stated by writer and sociologist Neil Postman (1996), in *The End of Education,*

> Public education does not serve a public. It creates a public. And in creating the right kind of public, the schools contribute to strengthening the spiritual basis of the American creed. The question is not 'does or doesn't public school create a public?' the question is, 'What kind of public does it create?'

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